



***DAILY***

***VITAMINS***

***OF***

***BASEBALL***

***V.1***

***WRITTEN BY***

***David Seccombe***

## Introduction

The mission of this book is to simply engage the mind to the many facets of baseball. It is a simple yet complex game. Sharing my personal experiences on and off the field, I will convey to you I have always been a student of the game. You and I are students of the game. We are responsible to play, understand and carry on the information the way we have come to know as the inner workings of baseball. Speaking of student of the game, the photo used for the cover of this book is from the Baseball Hall of Fame. Any guess to the colored baseballs? Considered to be “the greatest student of hitting,” Ted Williams gave us what he believed to be his batting average based on the location of the pitch. He was the last player in MLB history to hit over .400 avg., (.406 average, Boston Red Sox 1941). Ted Williams wouldn’t realize until later in life but he was a student of the game the moment he touched the baseball for the first time.

Starting from a young age I collected baseball cards, stayed outside until it was dark playing whiffle ball, anything and everything baseball. My passion runs deep, and if you’re reading this good chance you feel the same way.

*Daily Vitamins of Baseball Volume 1* is a personal journey zipping around stories, quotes and facts about baseball. I suggest you read one page per day. If you’re a player, reflect, take notes and apply any tips that may be helpful.

“I firmly believe that the only disability in life is a bad attitude.” – *Scott Hamilton*

“Be a student of yourself.” – *David Seccombe*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Seccombe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## MULTIVITAMINS

This program will help you understand baseball from all angles, giving the body and mind a balance of baseball nutrients. Read each day and enjoy the plethora of information!

### Day 1

“Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.” – *Wayne Gretzky*

Baseball's unique language and rules take time to understand. I equate this gathering of knowledge to a marathon and not a sprint. Preparation is the key to the development of a player, because without preparation in any sport is requiring a player to rely on talent only, and baseball does not allow talent alone to conquer the field.

### Head scratcher

The game is played on dirt and grass, but if the ball gets dirty, it is replaced with a new clean ball.

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## Day 2

“The most important part of a player’s body is above his shoulders.”-*Ty Cobb*

Growing up around the baseball field enjoying the game, the smells and the quirky superstitions creates an inseparable bond typically seen with kin. The bond starts at an early age when purchasing baseball cards at the gas station hoping to get the hottest MLB player. Passion for the game fuels you to learn more about the game, learning the names of the players of old and new. This burning passion for America’s pastime consuming the hearts core will unlock the mental capabilities of baseballs’ hidden gems.

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## Day 3

“The most important attribute a player must have is mental toughness.”

– *Mia Hamm*

Stay positive. Baseball is a game in which failure is normal. Every bit of success is magnified and with every success elevates confidence. We have all heard the saying “if you only get a hit three out of ten times and fail the other seven you are still a great hitter.” This is true! Hitters in the MLB are considered great hitters if they hit at or above .300 batting average. So stay positive when you don’t get a hit, even if it has been for a few at-bats. It only takes one hit, even a bunt counts, to get the ball rolling again to elevate confidence in the batter’s box.

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## Day 4

Visualize your future. Visualization can unlock the brains full potential. We have discussed the importance of the mental awareness needed to propel forward but beyond goals one needs to visualize their ending. Goals are important whether large or small but can you visualize yourself achieving them? Do you know how to obtain them? Will you have obstacles in your way? These are important questions but most importantly can you spend the needed time to close your eyes and imagine the success you deserve? I realized when I visualized the outcome I wanted, stayed on track with my process attaining the goal seemed to flow naturally.

**TIP:** Spend time in a quiet place before games to visualize the game you want to have.

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## Day 5

“The whole idea is to get an edge. Sometimes it takes just a little extra something to get that edge, but you have to have it.” – *Don Shula*

Winners always find an edge (advantage). Finding the edge may come in different shapes and sizes and knowing yourself is half the battle in identifying your edge. Winners always find a way to improve. Mental edge will always prevail even when the body is left without much more to give. Pitchers may notice certain pitches a hitter struggles with or a hitter may notice pitchers “tell” when throwing an off-speed pitch. Dig deep, deep inside is the winner begging to break out.

## Head scratcher

Baseball is one of the only sports where the team who has the ball is on defense.

## Day 6

“Mentally I try to stay at a medium level, not too high or too low.” – *Tod Zeile*

**K.I.S.S.** (Keep It Simple Stupid) The phrase written under the bill of a cap could make all the problems and anxieties disappear. An acronym for “Keep it simple stupid” was coined by an aircraft engineer Kelly Johnson in 1960. The KISS principle states that most systems work best when kept simple rather than made complicated. A pitcher steps off the back of the mound to take a mental pause, remove your cap, look at the KISS phrase, or any word or phrase of your liking and remember to focus on a simple task. Continue with self-talk “one pitch at a time.” Slow the game to the pace which is comfortable to you. Put your hat back on with conviction, clear the mechanism and get back to work.

**TIP:** Come up with a phrase or word to write under the bill of your cap. It could be the name of your favorite pet to the word “breathe.” Anything works as long as it’s a reset of the mind and gives reason to pause yourself.



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## Day 7

“You have to learn how to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.” –  
*Lou Piniella*

Self-talk is the inner voice we all have guiding us or sometimes crippling us. During competition an athlete who has positive self-talk has a higher chance of getting through tough situations. The impossible is now possible with self-talk instructing the brain and body. It's different from fight or flight mechanism, its more complicated and calculated. Pitchers, before the inning starts say “Let's go right after these guys and attack the glove.” Attitude and confidence, control it, channel it, and dominate with it.

## Day 8

“You must be present to win.” – *Alex Rodriguez*

Balance point. Strong pitchers have a distinct balance point position. It happens after the stride foot has lifted and just before the stride foot leads to its landing position. Balance and explosiveness equals power in the body creating arm speed. The balance in the beginning of the delivery must match the balance on the second half. When a pitcher can finish their pitch with both legs under control fielding becomes easier. Just ask Greg Maddux, 18 Rawlings Gold Glove Award Winner how critical balance is for pitching and fielding. He made sure to be a pitcher first then an infielder second.

**TIP:** A great way to work on balance is to stand on one leg and hold for five seconds. Repeat this on both legs for a few sets. Additionally, with one leg straight bend over and touch your toe balancing on the leg reaching for.

## Day 9

Warmup is starting the engine. Before you even think about picking up a baseball and begin playing catch the engine must be turned on.

Making a comparison to a car engine is how I will describe an athlete's body and the required tuned parts before tapping into peak performance.

To turn on the engine there must be a mental and physical decision.

Second, the body must be moved to create heat, letting all the necessary fluids to circulate in the body. Active stretching, explosive movements and resistance exercises are ways to activate key muscle groups in order for them to participate in the performance. Once all the tuned parts are activated and assessed, gradual power surges can test the bodies' ability to reach its full potential. Just like performance drag racers, the car engine is heated up, tires are burned up for traction and then the green light hits...its go time.

## Day 10

You only get one arm. It is a fact we only get the body we were born with. Baseball requires a strong throwing arm, especially as a pitcher, catcher, shortstop and outfield. Those positions have a great responsibility to not only themselves but to the team. One way to ensure your arm is up to peak strength and endurance is to use resistance bands throughout the week. A good rule to follow is use the bands three days per week. Most of the exercises should focus on the decelerator muscles which are located towards the back of the shoulder and latissimus muscles. These muscles slow the arm down after you throw but are the most neglected muscles during normal arm care. An equal balance of strength is important to prevent injury. When you pinch your shoulder blades together you are activating those important decelerator muscles all strong throwers must keep in shape.

**TIP:** Each morning stand with your back against the wall and pinch your shoulder blades together twenty times to promote good posture and activate the power muscles.

## Head scratcher

Tommy John elbow surgery is becoming more popular among pitchers who tear the ligament in their throwing elbow. Did you know the damaged ligament is replaced with either a fresh ligament from the hamstring or wrist?

## Day 11

Baseball is explosive then a period of relaxation. Whether you are pitching, hitting or sprinting for a ball in the gap, baseball is unique because of how explosive you must be on your reaction. Your reaction time is everything in baseball. Pitchers explosiveness to the target requires plyometric movement of the core and lower half of the body. Pushing off the pitching rubber creates acceleration and this explosive power is built by rigorously improving those fast twitch muscle groups.

**TIP:** Frog jump knee tucks demand the body to produce explosive movement mimicking the core and fast twitch needed in baseball. Stand with feet shoulder width apart, jump out in front of you as far as possible and as soon as you land explode vertically bringing both knees to your chest. Repeat five in a row for three sets. No Pain, no gain.

## Day 12

Stride then turn. Hitting and pitching are similar when using the rotational plane of the hips. Both require a great amount of quick hip turn to create the power necessary to drive a baseball in a gap or to throw 90 miles per hour. The most powerful players in the game are the best and strongest at “step and turn.” If you want to increase velocity in throwing or power with the bat, focus on this one area, especially the turn (centrifugal force).

**TIP:** Before hitting or pitching, practice hip rotation by placing a bat along the belt line on the lower part of your back. Simply turn the hips both ways making sure the bat gets to at least 90 degrees from its starting position. Over time quicken the movement until you feel it is game speed.

## Day 13

Yes mode. “Yes mode” means as a hitter you stand in the box ready to hit every pitch about to be thrown. As the pitcher starts his motion you are ready to hit any pitch. It is not until you are certain the pitch is no longer a strike for yes mode to be turned off. Even when the coach gives you a take sign 3-0 and you will not swing, yes mode is turned on and it is a perfect opportunity to see another pitch to train your eyes. Most likely if a strike is thrown 3-0, the 3-1 pitch will be the same speed. Take advantage of every pitch thrown to you as the brain is the supercomputer that needs its firmware updated!

## Day 14

Step in the circle. In the field whether you are playing first base or left field, players must step into a “focus circle” just before the pitcher releases the ball to the catcher. Once the player is in the circle predicting the outcome in real time is focused and reaction times are keen. If no action occurred, step behind the circle, run a mental checklist of responsibilities until the action is resumed. There is typically around 10 seconds of break between pitches and those precious seconds can make the difference between a win and loss. Knowing where to be or where the ball must be thrown before it happens starts outside the circle. Now that you have entered the circle it’s time to react and execute.

**TIP:** Practice stepping in the circle by watching a game on Television. Place a towel on the floor large enough to step into with feet shoulder width apart. Choose one player to simulate in the field. Prior to the pitcher begins his delivery say aloud where you will throw the ball if it comes to you. Always take note of: the outs, baserunners, inning, batter, pitcher and the count. Just before the pitcher releases step in the circle athletically right foot then left. Repeat with all positions.

## Head scratcher

Depending on the defense position will dictate the size of your glove. An infielder will use anywhere from an 11 to 12 inch glove and an outfielder will use up to a 13 inch.



## Day 15

Respect the officials. Being human we make mistakes and some make them more than others. The profession of an umpire is no exception to this rule. One of the most important qualities of a great player is an understanding and appreciation for officials knowing mistakes will happen and they are human.

**TIP:** Before taking the mound as a pitcher or stepping into the batter's box in your first at-bat, simply introduce yourself. The rapport has now been signed and sealed for possibly getting an extra inch on the corners or safe on a (bang-bang play) close call at the plate (advantage discussed on DAY 5). Regardless of the calls, showing respect to the officials of the game will entertain the Baseball Gods.

## Day 16

“Be quick but never hurry.” - *John Wooden*

A funny tale from Alaska. I was playing in the Alaskan collegiate summer baseball league in 2002 and there was a play in the game I will never forget. As I mentioned before about umpires and how they are human, clearly this story shows just that, but more importantly as a player here is how to handle this misfortune of error. Pitching in a close ball game our team was up 2-1 in the 6<sup>th</sup> inning, the leadoff batter got on by base hit. Knowing his speed I knew he would attempt to steal within the first couple of pitches. After throwing over keeping him off balanced he took off the very next pitch. Taught by some great pitching coaches I knew to slide step in this situation giving the catcher a chance to throw him out. Once I heard players yell “RUNNER” I purposely threw the pitch up in the strike zone for the catcher and better positioning for the throw down. As soon as the catcher had a handle and released the ball I knew the runner would be hard pressed to make it in time. As I turned my head towards second base to watch the play unfold, I anticipated an out by two steps. I was right. The catcher couldn't have made a better throw; second baseman couldn't have made a better tag. However, there was a small collision because of how hard the baserunner slid into the bag and the players got tangled up. The umpire who was pushing 70 years old panting towards the base looking and pointing yells “second baseman, show me the ball, show me the ball.” He lifted his glove up proudly and began to move his body to throw the ball around the infield convinced the out was to be declared by the umpire. That didn't happen. “SAFE...SAFE” yelled the official, his arms extended outwards a tad late compared to his verbal call. The puzzled looks around the field shared the same disbelief of what just happened. We all shrugged it off by a small laughter knowing the gentleman was wrong but we all, including the other team, understood he was human and we all make mistakes.

## Day 17

“Under pressure you can perform fifteen percent better or worse.” –*Scott Hamilton*

The best athletes can take pressure and thrive under its care like a nurturing mother and her baby. Some players however buckle and let pressure get the best of them. Have you ever seen an amateur player look confused or become “glazed” in their eyes? As a coach I have walked up to pitchers during a mound visit and assessed where their head is at. If their eyes are wondering in confusion and can’t focus on the present conversation I know their stress levels are high. Other times players who are in the zone can take those situations and make it look easy because they know their body and do not fear failure.

**TIP:** Ask yourself do you perform best when under pressure? Do you feel fear of failure? Does the outcome become overwhelming shadowing the process? Take your answers and evaluate how pressure affects you. Recognizing stress levels can act as a catapult to success rather than a crippling force.

## Day 18

“The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field.”- *Vince Lombardi*

Impress as if it’s your last. You never know who’s watching a game from warmups to post game celebrations. Character of a player is broadcasted every time you step on the field, and we all see. It’s on our face during defeat and it’s the mannerisms at times of success. The core integrity of a player is how he conducts himself when nobody is watching. If a player in high school has aspirations to play college and beyond and is told scouts would be watching his game, of course he would be on best behavior and try a little harder. But what happens when the player is having a rough game? He’s pressing and making uncharacteristic mistakes. How this player looks during these unfortunate times is benefiting the scouts greatly during evaluation. His character can still be impressive embracing adversity and not showing defeat or caving in. Impress even if things are not going your way because you never know who is watching. Make a lasting impression of how you play the game the right way.

**TIP:** Go out and play as if a person who has never watched baseball before will be coming to watch you play. This young enthusiastic person has heard about how you play hard and respect the game. We know first impressions are important so what kind of impact are you to make as they watch?

## Day 19

“The less tension and effort, the faster and more powerful you will be.”

– *Bruce Lee*

Expand then contract. Developing a stretching routine is vital for any athlete and no exception for baseball players. If you look at the body types of elite MLB players you will notice they are lean, tone and strong while being proportionate to their height and weight. I call this body type “farmer strong.” An Example of the ideal farmer strong body is Mike Trout. For pitchers the body becomes longer and thinner because of the body acts as a rubber band or bow and arrow. All of these body types must stretch for injury prevention and everyday maintenance. Stretching routines can include pre-game warmups, morning yoga or in the dugout between innings. Fast twitch muscles sweet spot is between limber and tight. Letting the muscles breathe with oxygen is how the process starts, and once the muscles have expanded they are ready to fire with compact, sharp explosive movements.

**TIP:** Create a stretching routine lasting ten minutes, focusing on all the major muscles groups. Start at the calves one day, then switch it up and start at the neck and work down.

## Day 20

“To succeed in baseball, as in life, you must make adjustments.”- *Ken Griffey Sr.*

Make the adjustments. Body awareness is knowing and feeling your body as you perform physical activities. Part of being a great player is having a heightened sense of your body. Furthermore, adjustments can only be made if the body and brain are synched together. If a hitter is late making contact on a hard fastball then he knows he must get started early and make the physical adjustments to do so. A pitcher who is missing arm side must feel his release point and make an adjustment. Running a mental checklist will help asses and fix the issue causing the arm to not hit the mark. The best players can fix the issues the quickest. The best can make adjustments. Can you?

## Head scratcher

What has a cushioned cork center, weighs 5 ounces, 4 separate layers of yarn, 9 inches in circumference, 108 stiches and covered in cowhide?

## Day 21

“You can observe a lot just by watching.” - *Yogi Berra*

Get a beat on the ball. Is it true the only players on the field to know the catcher signs is the pitcher and catcher? The answer is no! Anyone fielder who can see the sign and more importantly the location once the catcher sets up should use the information to predict the balls destination. For example, if the catcher is calling for an inside fastball to a right batter and you are playing centerfield, before the ball is hit your reaction should be anticipating the ball to your right. If the batter was late and fouled the ball of towards the first base line then shade a couple steps over to the left. Every pitch there is adjustment to be made even if it is only a step or two.

## Day 22

Positions and the differences. Baseball and its positions are specific in the attributes a player must possess to play the position effectively. Each player in team sports has a skillset unique to the position. In basketball the center is the tallest player and the guard is the best ball handler. In baseball the leadoff batter is the quickest base runner on the team and can make the pitcher throw extra pitches. Players who have the attributes must also know their role on the team and never try to take on a role of another. Cohesiveness among players will always out-weight the individuals battling for “best in show.”

Over the next few days we will discuss the types of hitters and their specific approaches.



## Day 23

The base stealer. Not always but many times the leadoff spot will be a player who will never be ashamed for taking a walk to first base. In fact, any way they can reach first base safely is a win for them. Once reaching first base the fun begins. The base stealer knows how to read a pitcher and take solid jumps whether it is a secondary or straight steal jump. Reading pitchers mannerisms is an art and takes experience. Knowledge in this department will help get the best jump possible. Rickey Henderson, MLB all time stolen base king also had the most unintentional base on balls, which means the man had a great eye for balls and strikes. And just to make matters worse for an opposing team who issues free passes, MLB statistics show when a lead off batter reach base by walk they score 23% of the time. Would it be a surprise Rickey Henderson also holds the MLB record for runs scored?

## Day 24

The free swinger. Have you ever seen a hitter swing at a pitch above his eyes? More than likely the player was in little league right? The reason why the better hitters do not swing at balls above their eyes is because they have “plate discipline.” A free swinger lacks the ability to hold off on pitches above, below or outside the strike zone making them an easy target for a strikeout. A free swinger will get themselves out if you avoid the strike zone. An exemption to the rule and an example of a free swinger who owned the title with success was Vladimir Guerrero. Guerrero was a tough out because he had the ability to square up pitches considered to be “pitchers pitches.” Most of the time pitchers pitches are on the corners of the strike zone or beyond enticing a hitter to chase. Vladimir excelled at hitting those pitches. The only effective ways to retire him was by changing speeds and changing his eye level. The pitcher must attack their acquired target and always be on the offense even when exiting the strike zone.

## Day 25

The disciplined hitter. Almost completely opposite of the free swinger is a hitter who is comfortable to hit any count. Their swing is quick, their body is balanced and their eyes can pick up the pitch early. Those three factors make up great hitters but the disciplined hitters also have an approach. Their plan is simple, depending on the situation, and once they have decided which plan is best they have quality at-bats to prove it. Let's look at an example of a disciplined hitters approach. A pitcher walks a batter to start the inning; the next batter also walks on just five pitches. You are the very next batter. Is your approach the same as a leadoff batter? The answer is yes, very similar. In this scenario you don't want to swing at the first pitch because the pitcher has shown little evidence of command. Work the count in your favor and if the fastball comes your approach is to hit the ball in the gap scoring the two runs. Easy right? Yes, yes it is, especially when you have an approach.

## Day 26

The power hitter. The power hitter usually hits third or fourth in the lineup because ideally baserunner(s) are in scoring position by the time they are up to bat. When I think of power hitters I think of bigger stronger players who have aggressive swings. One batter who made a career making pitchers cringe is David Ortiz. His persona alone was large let alone his forearms. He made Fenway Park and the infamous Green Monster look like a whiffle ball field. The only way to successfully keep him inside the park was to change eye levels and follow the traditional “hard in, soft away” approach. As a pitcher I would pitch him backwards, meaning begin with a curveball and eventually coming back to it a few pitches later for an out. Power hitters love to hit fastballs, so their kryptonite is the off-speed pitch, especially the kind not left over the meat of the plate. Power hitters are not created equal when it comes to their swing types. Early on in youth years, the power hitter will have a tendency to push their hands away from their body early in the swing “jamming” themselves on inside pitches. Pitchers, take advantage of this and do not be afraid to pitch inside to power hitters, they want to extend their arms for more power! However, as the power hitter develops a correct swing, the hands get pulled in closer to the body making the inside pitch easier to hit. Pitchers, don’t worry, they are still human and with the correct sequence you will get them out by pitching backwards, limit fastballs and avoid getting behind in the count.

## Day 27

“Every time your back is against the wall, there is only one person that can help you. And that’s you. It comes from the inside.” – *Pat Riley*

The human rain delay. Have you ever seen a hitter call time to the umpire, step out of the box and attempt clear his eye? Good chance the batter is buying time and causing a pause or disruption for some reason. There are many reasons for players to pause the game, and we will discuss those. If a batter steps out as we described he may be trying to disrupt the rhythm of the pitcher. Maybe the relief pitcher in the bullpen needs extra time to get loose because he is starting the next inning. Calling time to an umpire is not the only way to pause the game. Sometimes players take extra time before walking up to the plate, or pitchers rubbing the ball for better grip. Sometimes we see veteran pitchers want to exchange out a baseball with the umpire, even though the ball was just fine.

**TIP:** Anytime you feel the game needs a pause call time. This tactic is mostly for hitters, pitchers just step off.

## Day 28

“I’m proof that great things can happen to ordinary people if they work hard and never give up.” – *Orel Hershiser*

Don’t celebrate until the last out is made. Have you ever watched a game where a pitcher had a no-hitter going? Did you notice in the dugout how players avoided him? There is an unwritten rule in baseball when a pitcher is “in the zone” is to leave them in the zone, allowing the baseball Gods to work with him on a personal level. The last thing you would hear in the dugout is “hey, did you know you have a no-hitter going?” That is called a cardinal rule. One of the biggest NO-NO’s in baseball. Instead, let the karma marinate the situation. Don’t celebrate until the journey is over. Allow the celebration to be purified at the moment when the no-hitter is complete. It’s much sweeter when it happens and in the end no matter what happens, the ride was more important.

## Day 29

“Be a student of yourself.” – *David Seccombe*

Keep a journal. Making physical and mental gains take time, patience and dedication to the process. If you document your failures, successes and personal details, wouldn't it make sense to reflect back on those times for reference? Sometimes we forget what “mantra” or meal was what got us back into the groove, but if we write down how the inner workings of how the brain handles situations then it's easier to find a quick solution.

**TIP:** A perfect opportunity to reflect is after the game. I remember the car rides home is when I reflected how I played. Take time to document, take personal ownership of your mental development. Be a student of yourself.

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